





AN  
OPEN LETTER  
TO A  
ROMAN CATHOLIC FRIEND.

Translated from the German of G. vom Rath,

PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BONN.

BY  
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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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Four hundred years ago MARTIN LUTHER was born, and, thirty-seven years afterwards, in his address to the German Emperor and nobility, he set forth the best practical antidote we possess to the magnificent fallacy which exalts the Bishop of Rome as absolute spiritual ruler and temporal dethroner over all Christendom. "The secular power is of God, to punish the wicked and protect the good, and so has rule over the whole body of Christians." These are LUTHER'S words founded upon well-known texts in Holy Scripture; yet in our own day, Rome has, more definitely and persistently than ever, formulated its claims. On this, the four hundredth anniversary of LUTHER'S birth, and at a time when the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church seem quite unrestrained in condemning those who do not bow to its decrees, it seems not inopportune to allow a voice to be heard in defence of our common Protestantism. These words of Professor VOM RATH, one of the foremost scientific men in Europe, are of value, not only because they expose the fundamental errors of Roman Catholicism, but also for the testimony they bear against the materialistic tendencies of the present age. The translator hopes that they may be of service in pointing out the right middle path between sacerdotalism and agnosticism, and enabling Protestant Christians to give, both to the superstitious and the sceptical, "a reason concerning the hope that is in them, yet with meekness and fear."

MONTREAL, 10th Nov. 1883.



## An Open Letter to a Roman Catholic Friend.

"If ye abide in my word then are ye truly my disciples, and  
"ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

St. John viii. 31, 32.

"Ye were bought with a price; be not ye the slaves of men."

I Cor. vii. 23.

It would indeed be a strange thing, and much to be deplored, if we two, who build upon the same foundation, should be unable to attain to a better understanding and to ever increasing mutual esteem.

I certainly express your inmost conviction as well as my own, when I acknowledge that "other foundation can no man lay, than "that which is laid which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. iii. 11), or to express this in Christ's own words: "I am the way, the truth, and the "life." (St. John xiv. 6). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but "my words shall not pass away." (St. Matt. xxiv. 35). Since we know that Christianity is the result of Christ's own labours, then His words and teaching, His example, His life and death, must be for us the foundation of faith and practice. On this point all Christians are of course fully agreed. The words of Christ have truly a peculiar power, and are indeed words of everlasting life. Spoken by the Sea of Galilee, in parables and sermons, eighteen hundred years ago, they still fill the round world, educating, strengthening and comforting: they call to the lost, they sustain the dying. Proclaimed from Heaven they find an echo in the hearts of mankind. They are full of the spirit of God. Do you remember this saying: "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (St. Matt. xvi. 26). Every man, who is not quite entangled in the meshes of error, must concede to these words of Christ the highest authority. The Apostles have also said much that is glorious and imperishable, but no other human teaching can transcend that of Christ. We trace then, (I speak also in your name) our faith back to Christ. Nothing that we

believe, or in which we have confidence, dare conflict with Christ's clear and distinct teaching. The words of Christ must be to us the highest standard, in which case we shall be able to oppose those who make use of the letter of Scripture either for the purpose of destroying Christianity, or in order to deprive reason entirely of its power. It is true that Christ's lofty form will always appear to us sinful men to possess something which we cannot grasp, something entirely incomprehensible. It is only certain phases of His character, especially such as are turned towards suffering humanity, which appear perfectly distinct to our consciousness. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." (St. Matt. xi. 28).

There are two features which I should like to emphasize here, as specially glorious in Christ's words and doctrines: the perfect *love* which engrossed him, and which he enjoined upon us as a duty, and and the *freedom* which he wished to confer upon us. True love and true liberty, these are the two indestructible corner-stones upon which Christ founded his world conquering Gospel. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." (St. Matt. v. 44, 45). "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (St. Matt. xxii. 39). "Judge not and ye shall not be judged; condemn not and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven." (St. Luke vi. 37). "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." (St. Luke vi. 31). These and numerous other sayings of Christ, universally known and accepted, prove incontestably that he made it our duty to exercise the most untiring love, the widest toleration, and the highest esteem towards our neighbour. Nothing, which is Christian in its character, can conflict with this duty. Even the convictions of our fellowmen, however much they may be opposed to our own, must be respected by us if they are only upright and candid. And it is especially in this matter of religious belief that it becomes our duty to extend love and toleration to our neighbour, if we are to be regarded as Christians in the true sense. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations," says the Apostle. (Romans xiv. 1.) "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Romans xiv. 1-5.) So much may be

said regarding the commandment of love, which is therefore most especially the fundamental principle of every system of true Christianity.

It is not less certain that Christ wished to make us free, free from sin, free from spiritual bondage. His words are "The truth shall make you free." (St. John viii. 32.) Read, I pray you, the sayings of Christ attentively, and you will be filled with the conviction that this divine Teacher appeals not only to the conscience but to the reason of each individual. Christ teaches and persuades, wakens and stirs up to earnest thinking. He is anxious not only that we should hear the Gospel, but understand it. In order that you may not entertain the faintest doubt on this point, I shall bring up certain passages of Scripture in support of it. Christ says, "When any one heareth the word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side." (St. Matt. xiii. 19.) Further, "He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit." (St. Matt. xiii. 23.) "Hear and understand." (St. Matt. xv. 10.) "Are ye so without understanding also?" says Jesus to His disciples, when they do not understand His parables. (St. Mark vii. 18.) He says, further, to His disciples, "Perceive ye not yet, neither understand?" (St. Mark vii. 18.) Christ's whole method of teaching is designed to awaken thought on the part of the listener. For this reason he speaks in parables, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables, and without a parable spake he not unto them." (St. Matt. xii. 34.) "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (I Thess. v. 21.) The Apostles also insist upon the same thing. Paul says, "The Lord give thee understanding in all things." (II Tim. ii. 7.) Further, "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God." Further, "Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry, I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." (I Cor. x. 15, 16.) "Brethren, be not children in understanding, howbeit, in malice be children, but in understanding be men." (I Cor. xiv. 20.) It is therefore undeniably true that, according to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, the reception of the Gospel must not take place without the application and exercise of the understanding. "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the slaves of men," says the Apostle.

That then is the freedom which is an essential characteristic of



the teaching of Christ. He appeals to our conscience and reason, and doing this is the foundation and corner-stone of the Gospel and "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." (St. Math. xxi. 44) I therefore maintain that, if I am to be a Christian, I must neither silence my conscience nor stifle my understanding. But, at this point I hear you say, how is it then when faith and reason come into conflict with each other? which of these heavenly powers is then to give way; which to conquer the other? My reply to these questions is this: Examine the Bible and nowhere in it will you find this contradiction which our misled age looks upon as irreconcilable. It is just this frequent reference to a supposed conflict betwixt knowledge and faith, which is such a bad sign of our times, a certain proof that the Spirit of true Christianity has departed from us, and also that reason has gone widely astray. Every man sound in heart and healthy in spirit, must agree with Paul when, in his Epistle to the Romans (i. 20), he proves the existence of God "His eternal power and Godhead" from his works and especially from the Creation of the world. Every one must admit that the Universe *i. e.* the Kosmos, the well-ordered, organized world, pre-supposes a Creator. It is only a quite disordered mind that can look upon the world as the result of accident; a world which, to use the expression of the great investigator, Helmholtz, is so constituted "as if the wisest wisdom "had put it in order." Long ago Socrates taught that it is folly to assume the existence of reason in man, and not also in the great unity of nature. Even in that early age, he, exactly like Paul, discovered, in the consideration of natural things, the foundation for belief in the existence of God; of an "all governing, all guiding, omniscient, and just Being." In all this, where is the disagreement betwixt science and faith?

It is no doubt the case that we believe and must believe much of what we never can comprehend and of what lies far beyond our reason. But there is an essential difference betwixt that which is *supra* and that which is *contra rationem*. I remind you here of the words of an excellent theologian of the sixteenth century (Ostorodt): "For it is one thing not to comprehend a matter, (because we "are ready to acknowledge that a Christian ought to believe many "things which he cannot understand with his reason) and another "thing it is when our reason argues, points out, proves and maintains that a certain something cannot in any manner be or exist." No doubt we are bound to believe much that we cannot behold, and of which our minds can form no picture. But nowhere are we com-

manded to regard as true that against which our understanding bears witness, revolts and protests. Such a faith would be dead of itself and altogether unworthy of a reasonable being. If it were our duty to believe that which is contrary to reason, we should no doubt find a command to that effect in the holy Scriptures. Instead of that we find exactly the opposite. Christ exacts from us an understanding of the Gospel.

The teaching of Christ therefore plainly condemns those who demand from a believer that he should deny himself the use of reason. I must take up the holy Scripture with enlightened reason, and appropriate it; I must make use of reason in order to judge whether that which is called Christian accords with, or is in opposition to, the Word of God. If I hear the command addressed to me that I am to sacrifice my reason, or, as it is expressed in the language of Rome, the commandment of the *Sacrificio dell intelletto*, I perceive at once that such a demand is not only inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, but contrary to the express, distinct, simple words of Christ himself. Here there is no choice. It is either with Christ or with Rome! Well I remember the inscription on the obelisk of the Vatican, "*Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat.*" ("Christ conquers, Christ is King, Christ governs.") In full view of the Papal palace, these words are in their proper place. Christ will also conquer the Pope. Thus the choice is easy; neither can it be difficult for you.

Christ and His Gospel ought to govern and penetrate the whole man. It is impossible to renounce the exercise of our reason if we desire to be preserved from falling into the gravest errors. And reason, or sound common sense must be continually made use of to stir up and purify the conscience, if we are to make any progress on the steep road towards purification and perfection. The Apostle writes, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they be of God." (1 John iv. 1.). From this we see that, even at that early time, when the remembrance of Christ and His teaching must still have been fresh and vivid, voices and views arose, against which the Apostle felt constrained to warn the Church; false prophets who abused the name of Christ. Aye, if He, the divine Teacher, were to come again today, and were to enter into the midst of the Roman Church, He would surely call out "Woe unto you! Has my teaching come to this? Depart from me!" In what way could we possibly excuse ourselves? It could not be done, because we possess His words, the words of everlasting life, by which we are commanded

to test the spirits that are from Him. We should be unable to escape His condemnation by interposing some one else, whose opinion we had adopted. Christ acknowledges no mediator betwixt Himself and men. Each individual must enter into personal relationship with Him, if he wishes to be partaker of His saving truths. I am quite willing to agree with you, if you say with respect to the Christian faith, that it should, like accumulated savings, bear interest, and in no possible way remain a dead letter. In like manner you will agree with me that the truths proceeding, in the course of ages and with greater and greater distinctness, from the accumulated treasure of faith, cannot and dare not conflict with the distinct words, or with the spirit of the teaching of Christ. Here the text applies "ye shall know them by their fruits." Now, you call yourself a Roman Catholic, and acknowledge yourself to be such; you know no Catholicity without subjection to Rome, in matters of faith and morals. With reference to the pretension of Rome to be regarded as the true heir of Apostolic Christianity, I shall have more to say bye and bye. Here I take the liberty of doubting whether your submission to Rome is complete. According to the declaration of infallibility, the Pope alone can decide as to which of his utterances are to be regarded as infallible rules in what concerns faith and morals. This matter is no longer dependent on the subjective interpretation of the individual. It is quite certain that the Pope considers the propositions in his so called Syllabus as infallible rules, to which the faithful have humbly to submit themselves. On this point there is no doubt whatever amongst consistent Romish theologians. By his declaration of infallibility, the Pope has caused the propositions to be regarded as truths of the highest importance, which every Roman Catholic is bound in conscience to believe. For instance, the 17th paragraph forbids anyone to entertain the belief that those who are not Roman Catholics can attain everlasting salvation. The Pope, the Vicar of Christ; aye, the Vicar of God, as the Archbishop of Cologne lately expressed it, prohibits you from believing that your departed mother can ever attain to heaven. Therefore, I take the liberty of contradicting your words; you cannot be an Ultramontanist. You cannot submit yourself to the Pope's ruling. It is impossible for you to do it. You are not an Ultramontanist and not a thorough Roman Catholic. I myself entertained for many years an affectionate reverence for the Pope. Even now I well remember the time when he placed himself at the head of the movement for Italian freedom. I had seen him so often and heard his voice in chant and sermon. In the midst of

the frightful worldliness and corruption of the Romish Church, the venerable form of Pius the Ninth was touching and grateful to me. But a great change has come over him since the time when all the efforts towards political and spiritual liberty combined themselves under his name. Very soon, indeed, the dark shadows were perceived in advance of the events which were to follow. Pius, once so mild and beneficent, fell a prey to the most terrible influences. Never did there live a Pope who has so often and so continuously been occupied in cursing and condemning. "Bless those who curse you," says Christ. In spite of all this, I still continued to entertain a certain amount of reverence for the venerable old man. At last, two years after the Italians had taken possession of Rome, I read the well authenticated words to which Pius gave utterance when describing the condition of Rome after the occupation. In one of the great audiences held by him, the Pope used these words: "In this holy city houses of ill-fame have arisen, and what is still worse, Protestant churches." In this way did Pius express himself regarding the places of worship of my co-religionists. I will not dwell upon this because my inmost soul revolts indignantly to hear thus described, the quiet, modest churches of Evangelical Christians and of the so persecuted and martyred Waldensians of Italy, who were thrown down from high towers and precipitous rocks at the command of the Romish inquisitors. I know these unembellished houses of worship, and can testify that true Christianity is taught in them, Christianity strictly in accordance with the New Testament. Dear friend, you call yourself an ultramontanist, and yet, as I believe, you were never on the other side of the mountains, and do not know the condition of the Romish Church in Italy from personal observation. With your deep religious feelings, your love of truth and faithfulness to conviction, who can say that you would call yourself an ultramontanist if you actually knew, by autopsy, the Romish Church in Italy, and the pitiable and even desperate condition of the people? When you walk into the celebrated church Ara Cœli at the Capitol, there you read the inscription "By every mass said at this altar a soul is freed from purgatory." The altar ten steps distant will not do this, and of course the fee at the first altar is four or five times as high. This is the way in which the Pope localizes the power of the Divine grace and pity.

Who, but the Roman Catholic Church, bears the essential part of the blame for the pitiable religious condition of the Italian people? Catholic Christians like yourself are not to be found in Italy; the

people do not understand why we Germans have such interest in religion as the highest good of man. How you would be astonished and indeed most painfully affected, if you were to hear (as I have heard quite generally in Italy), cultivated men, worthy of all respect in other particulars, express absolutely irreligious views ! I have still a lively recollection of the terrible way in which celebrated and learned men in Italy expressed either anger or contempt when the conversation turned upon the Church and its officials. A man like X—, in Rome, for whom I entertain the greatest respect, a man much visited by misfortune, was unable to find words to express the way in which he from his deepest soul abhorred the Papal rule. You would be horrified if I were to repeat to you the opinions which I have heard generally expressed by the cultivated men of Italy regarding ecclesiastical institutions.

Perhaps the most frightful result of the religious condition of Italy is the manner in which family life is poisoned and destroyed, and that, too, in a certain respect by these very institutions. While the wife cannot give up the church, the husband relapses into irreligion. "My wife may go to church if she cannot leave it alone, but I will never put my foot there, and no priest shall dare to cross my threshold." Such and similar expressions on the part of the men are frequently heard in Italy. The priest possesses the heart of the wife, the husband only her outward form. Man and wife sit together at the same table but are inwardly separated. The Romish Church has exercised the most withering influence on the religious consciousness of the Italian people. In my mind's eye I place opposite to, and compare with each other, Roman Catholic Calabria and Evangelical Norway, Catholic Sicily in its horrible social and moral degradation, with Protestant Iceland and its virtuous population. I might elaborate such comparisons, but my letter would be endless. The Church bears, although not exclusively, yet principally, the blame.

How has the religious life of the Romanic nations, the noblest and most gifted of the globe, been developed under the rule of the Romish Church ? The Church, which should bind men together as brothers, does the opposite among Roman Catholic nations. It separates the cultivated from the uncultivated. The latter relapse into superstition and fanaticism, while the cultivated part of the population turns aside from the Church and religion and too often embraces materialism. Look at the ecclesiastical pageants in the Romish churches, or the pilgrimages in France and then remember the words of Christ, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him

"must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (St. John iv. 24.) If you do this then will you become aware of the wide difference between the teaching of Christ and that of the Papal Church. To "worship in truth"! the touchstone of a church, the educator of the human race is truth and truthfulness. Well, what is the character of the utterances of the highest authorities of the Romish Church? Not lies certainly, nor truth either, but ambiguousness. This Romish art of speaking begets deceitfulness, and undermines veracity among the faithful.

We frequently hear the view expressed that the Romish Church, with its form of worship, captivating the heart and feelings, is more adapted to the peculiarities of the Romanic peoples than the simpler worship of the Evangelical Church. But no opinion could be more erroneous and unjust. Look at the glorious beginning which the Reformation had in Italy, France and even Spain. In France alone, millions of men embraced the new faith, and, three hundred years ago, liberty of conscience and the exercise of their religion were conceded to them. How very different would have been the development of the Christian church if the Reformation among the Romanic nations had not been suppressed with fire and crushed in blood!

Many stupendous deeds of wickedness stain the history of humanity. But it describes nothing more terrible than those deeds by which the Romish Church and the governments under its influence rooted out our co-religionists from the earth in those fair southern countries. Do you remember the deed of horror by which, on St. Bartholomew's night (1575), five thousand Protestants were sacrificed in Paris. In Rome a *Te Deum* was celebrated when the news arrived of the consummation of this terrible crime. Have you perhaps heard of the Cevennes war in which thousands of Protestants, who had taken refuge in the Cevennes mountains in order to preserve their faith, were hunted and killed like wild beasts?

In France the Protestants were opposed in great wars, which cost the kingdom over a million of its best citizens, but in Spain the new faith did not rise to such power. There the Reformation was not suppressed by massacres, great sieges (such as that of La Rochelle in 1528), or by hunting human beings. In Spain the Inquisition did its awful work in silence. Over thirty thousand of the best and most innocent persons were burnt alive in Spain alone, and probably nearly a hundred thousand in the Spanish and Portuguese lands on this and the other side of the ocean. Not less is the number of those whose mouldering bones were disinterred and publicly burnt, in

order that their heresy, discovered after death, might be expiated. The Court graced with its presence these executions, to witness which was considered a good work. At that time, there were thus produced in Spain a numerous class of persons dishonoured, destitute of rights and outlawed, who were correctly described in the language of the officials as the "sons of the burned" (*Hijos dos quemados*).

Does it appear wrong in me thus to remind you of those frightful deeds, which we would fain wipe out of human history with our tears? Is it wrong to bear witness against the Romish Church, which claims to be able to make disposition of the treasure of mercy bequeathed by Christ? No! No! The memory of these martyrs of the Christian faith must not be allowed to die. Torquemada was approved by the Romish Pope as chief judge in matters of faith in Castile, Leon, Valencia, and Arragon. He performed his duties in such a fearful manner, that during his fifteen years activity (1483-1498) eight thousand eight hundred human beings, the images of their Creator, were burnt alive by his orders. I beg you to reflect a moment on what it means to burn a human being alive. If there is really a devil, he could not contrive anything more devilish than this. At the thought of it the genius of humanity covers his face.

Just as in Spain and Portugal, the reaction raged in a similar way in Italy. Thus were the Latin nations filled with fear and horror, their religious life poisoned and annihilated, and that which we mourn to day, fanaticism among the masses, and indifference among the educated, is the harvest from that terrible seed of blood and fire, sown by the Romish Church in the 16th and 17th centuries.

A milder age has replaced those centuries of woe. The State stretches out a protecting hand over tortured humanity. But still the infallible Pope Pius in one of the paragraphs of his Syllabus condemns anew the opinion that physical punishment ought not to be inflicted on heretics.

Well I know, that you mourn and deplore with me all the innocent blood of pious christians thus shed and which still cries to heaven. But I hear you say "That is only the frail human exterior of the "Catholic Church which you have described, subject to all the "changes of the times. We cannot make the Church responsible for "all the crimes which have been committed in its name; it is the "evanescent exterior which so frequently occasions prejudice and "deep misunderstanding." But you must remember that you are not allowed to form a subjective opinion as to what is superficial and what essential to the Romish Church; in that matter the only judge

is the Romish Pope, the infallible Pope, he who canonized the Spanish inquisitor Peter Arbues, another of those who were concerned in burning their fellowmen.

It appears therefore that the Roman Catholic Church reveres as a saint, a man, a devil in the shape of a man, who burnt to ashes many of the best and most innocent beings. This saint is regarded as possessing works of supererogation, and as an intercessor with the all-merciful God. Exercising his infallible authority, Pius the ninth pronounced the canonization of this saint. The same Pope conferred the same honor on a king whose only title to saintship consisted in his having, with his own hands, laid a billet of wood upon the pile at the stake where it was intended to burn a man on account of his faith. And this same Pius, he who so uninterruptedly hurls his anathemas against those of other religions persuasions and especially against those who do not believe in him, is to-day, by the silent consent of more than a hundred million persons, regarded as the Vicar of God and Christ! of Him who says "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (St. Matt. xi. 28-30.)

With deep emotion and from the depth of my conscience, I must express to you, dear friend, my conviction that among the mysterious things which God has permitted in this world, the development of the Roman Catholic Church appears to be the most incomprehensible. If anything could shake my faith in Providence and in the Divine Government of the world, it would be the existence and activity of this church.

Allow me now to say a word regarding the dogma of infallibility in which, according to your belief, the Catholic faith has found its most pregnant expression. Inseparably connected with it is the doctrine of the Universal Episcopate regarding which Pope Gregory the Great (A.D. 590-604) pronounced the following judgment; he said it was "born of vanity; a scandal in the Church; a wicked undertaking against the commandment of God, against the Gospel, against the laws of the Church, against the Church constitution, against the dignity of the bishops; an injury to the Church as a whole and a blasphemy." These are the words of the Great Pope Gregory. *Omne regnum in se divisum desolabitur.* (Every kingdom divided against itself shall fall.)

The history of the Vatican Council lies wide open before the



eyes of every searcher after truth. All the circumstances connected with it are well known. There, the most celebrated bishops in the world, the representatives of the largest dioceses solemnly protested against the proceedings of the Council "in order," as they wrote, "that we may in this manner, before men as well as before God's judgment seat, disavow the responsibility for its disastrous consequences. Of this the present writing shall be an everlasting proof." Truly a certain school of thought in the Roman Catholic Church has found its expression and completion in the new dogma, but its renunciation of true Christianity is also complete. In view of such proceedings and acts on the part of the Roman Catholic Church, the evangelical Christian remembers that at the Reformation certain parts of the Apocalypse.—I will not quote them—were interpreted as having reference to Rome and the Popes.

Nevertheless, it is the case that besides the fatal influences which have gained the mastery under Pius, and which threaten to divide and destroy our dear regenerated Fatherland, there exists another and milder current of thought which is truly Catholic without occasioning the frightful consequences, which, bringing ruin on the Church, came to light in 1870. I am utterly unable to persuade myself that the Catholic Church is identical with the Papal Church in the form which the latter has assumed before our eyes. Is it possible that so many pious and enlightened men and ecclesiastics (suffice it to mention one of them, Bishop Diepenbrock) should have been completely in error, when they looked upon themselves as faithful and obedient servants and patriotic citizens of a State in which religious equality prevailed, without, on that account, doing violence to their religious convictions? No, no, they were and are good Catholics, faithful and obedient officials and honoured citizens. They certainly held the opinion that the State is obliged to acknowledge the equality of the various confessions, and they did not give up the hope that even their evangelical and hebrew fellow-citizens might be saved. But anyone who now acknowledges the Romish Pope as supreme judge in matters of faith and morals, and is consequently prepared, in obedience to orders, to sacrifice to him his reason and even his very conscience, such a man must consider the principle of religious equality as "madness," and look upon his fellow citizens of other persuasions as doomed to eternal perdition. At the same time I cannot understand how a man, entertaining such convictions, can be a good servant and citizen of any State in which religious equality exists.

I now revert to the claim of Rome to be regarded as the only true

Apostolic Church. I do not here speak of evangelical Christians such as I am ; we stand quite on one side ; we do not acknowledge Apostolic succession, nor possess authority to teach and preach ; we have only the New Testament, particularly the words of Jesus " This " is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved " you." (St. John xv. 12). " These things I command, that ye may " love one another. (St. John xv. 17.) " This is life eternal, that they " should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst " send, even Jesus Christ." (St. John, xvii. 3). We interpret these words according to our conscience, which we strive to stir up and purify by means of our reason. Moreover, we build upon these words of Christ, " When two or three are gathered together in my name " there am I in the midst of them." (St. Matth. xiii, 30). Not of ourselves, but with reference to the Greek Church, the orthodox and Catholic Church of the East, I would like to say a few words. On my last journey I passed through countries in which this Church is established, and came into intimate contact with its clergy and laity. Even in my first conversations with them I learned (and my heart was filled with joy at the thought) that, in the countries of the Greek Church, no one has ever been burnt on account of his religious belief. For such a Church ; for a Christian religious association, whose members have never burnt each other alive, we must certainly entertain a very lively sympathy. I heard a great deal about the quiet and peacefulness that reigns in this Church from the White Sea to Egypt ; from Hungary to Persia. No new dogma " disorders the conscience." Such a thing must neither be taught nor believed. " If " any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues " that are written in this book" (Rev. xxii. 18). This Church rejects purgatory, indulgences, the supererogatory merits of the saints, and the adoration of the host, (in the manner of Roman Catholics). It allows the marriage of priests and glories in its unfalsified traditions. It has never exercised any worldly power, and consequently has remained faithful to the words of Christ, " My kingdom is not of this " world," words which so loudly condemn the temporal power of the Papacy. The Popes have often cursed the Catholic Church of the East, but this does not prevent nearly eighty millions of men from living a Christian life, and devoutly dying in it pious faith. The curses on the part of the Romish Popes are answered by the Greeks producing proof that the Latins have distorted dogma and tradition by the introduction of forgeries. This proof certainly seems to be incontrovertible. I was further gratified by observing that, in this

Church, use is made of the common tongue in public worship, and not of a dead language, as is almost exclusively the case in the Romish Church. It therefore appears to me that the Catholic Church of the East, which is founded upon unfalsified tradition and Apostolic succession, has very essential advantages over the Romish Church. No doubt science and art have not been so much cultivated in the lands of the Greek Church; it has not produced an Albertus Magnus or Rafael, but on the other hand, the spirit of primitive Christianity has not departed from it.

In the Armenian Church a more cultivated and scientific life was developed. It is also an Apostolic Church and possesses the continuity of tradition. It rejects purgatory, administers the sacrament in both forms and prescribes the marriage of priests. Its visible head, the "Katholikos," dwells at the foot of the holy Mount Ararat surrounded by excellent schools and seminaries. He is the successor of Gregory "the Enlightened," and of the Apostles. No other Church among those called orthodox has been fated to tread the path of suffering to such an extent as the Armenian. If uninterrupted connection with Apostolic times and the preservation of the pure Gospel is a proof of truth and genuineness in a Church, then the Armenian is in these respects equal to the Greek and superior to the Romish Church.

Therefore, to every candid enquirer, the pretention of Rome to be considered chiefly, and even exclusively, Catholic and orthodox must appear inexplicable. If the history of the development of the principal Christian Churches were more generally known, this unjustifiable claim would find no support among the people. In that case, the oft repeated terrible curses launched by the Romish Popes, not only against us, the heretics, but against the Apostolic Churches of the East, would be powerless against the spirit of true Christianity.

In the Church of St. Peter, the Basilica of the Vatican, when the eyes are raised to the immense arched dome above, there are perceived, written in gigantic golden letters these celebrated words of Christ: *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram, aedificabo ecclesiam meam et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum.* (Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church, and I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven.)—Upon these uncertain words the primacy and papacy have been built, in the course of subsequent centuries. Again, the command of Christ to Christians to understand the Gospel must be obeyed. If we seek to understand the meaning of these indistinct words by comparing them with other of Christ's sayings, and consider

the denial of Christ by Peter, the relations of the Apostles to each other, and the history of primitive Christianity, we come to the conclusion that never was there a greater or more destructive misuse made of Christ's sayings than in the founding of the Popish primacy by means of these words. Opposite to them we place the perfectly clear, unequivocal, command which Christ gave to the people and his disciples—"But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren." (St. Matt. xxiii. 9.) These words of Christ pronounce an annihilating judgment not only against the Primacy but against the whole hierarchy. Therefore, we evangelical Christians know no hierarchy, but believe in a common priesthood established by Christ, "who loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father." (Rev. i. 5, 6.)

And now, my dear friend, let us trust in God; Let us rid ourselves of the fear that scientific research may destroy religion and Christianity and dissolve everything in Atheism and Materialism. Such epidemic diseases of the Spirit are subject to the same laws as other plagues; they rise, spread, attain a maximum and become extinguished of themselves. Let us hold fast to these truly Catholic, to these old Catholic words. *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas.* (In things necessary, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things charity.) But Christian freedom of belief will become greater in the same degree as we give room to Christian love "to the love of God shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans v. 5.)

G. VOM RATH.

BONN,  
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